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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq Middle East - Olmert to Europe
- Gaza Violence European Defense
PARIS - Wednesday, June 14, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq
Middle East - Olmert to Europe - Gaza Violence
European Defense

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Le Figaro reports on its front page "Iraq: President Bush's Surprise Visit" and entitles its inside article: "Bush in the Heart of the Iraqi Quagmire;" Le Parisien carries a color photo of President Bush shaking hands with PM al-Maliki. This is also the "Photo of the Day" selected by France Soir. (See Part C)

Yesterday's front page of afternoon paper Le Monde ran a photo of President Bush and his cabinet advisors at Camp David and a report on the Iraq strategy meeting in an article entitled: "George Bush refuses to set a date for the withdrawal of the troops." (See Part C)

Le Monde profiled Charles Swift, the defense lawyer assigned by the Pentagon to defend Bin Laden's former driver held in Guantanamo. "Swift and others contest the arbitrariness of special tribunals set up after 9/11... In a document sent to the Courts, they compare President Bush to George III who refused to grant his subjects in the colonies the same rights British subjects enjoyed in the mainland..." Swift is quoted: "I swore to uphold the Constitution, not to obey the President..."

In Le Figaro, a brief item reports on the French government officially lining up behind the EU to close Guantanamo: "Yesterday, France declared its 'solidarity' with Austria's demarche to ask for the closing of Guantanamo during the next U.S.-EU summit. The Foreign Ministry said it was waiting for 'the results of the U.S. investigation' into the recent suicides."

La Croix's question of the day, "Is Europe Sufficiently Mobilized Against Guantanamo?" is answered by Jean-Marie Cavada, President of the Commission on Civil Liberties at the EU Parliament: "Europe must protest further in order to lead the U.S. to close Guantanamo. On Tuesday, the Parliament voted a text which states that Guantanamo stands outside the law... While the vote carries no political obligation, it will have important repercussions on the international scene, and on the image of the U.S. ... The text will put pressure on the U.S. to talk about this issue during the U.S.-EU summit next week." Cavada also raises the EU's opposition to transferring personal travelers' data to the U.S. government.

La Croix devotes its lead to "Increased Violence in Gaza" and reports extensively on PM Olmert's visit to Paris. For Le Figaro, "The Palestinians Are on the Verge of a Civil War," a headline echoed in Le Parisien. (See Part C)

La Croix interviews Jacques Huntzinger, former French Ambassador to Israel and President of the France-Israel Foundation: "The relationship that developed between Sharon and Chirac in 2004 influenced France's Israel policy. Chirac became aware that to carry influence in the Middle East, one needed to have an Arab policy but also a relationship with Israel... Olmert convinced Sharon to pull out of Gaza... and that Israel must move towards two separate states... But it is a fact that unilateralism must now make way to a dialogue with the Palestinians..."

Two op-eds in Le Figaro deal with European issues: one, penned jointly by Defense Ministers from France and Germany, Alliot-Marie and Jung, is entitled: "Europe's Armed Forces: a Global Mission for Peace." (See Part C) The second, penned by researcher Gustav Lindstrom, calls for a "joint national security structure at the European level, similar to the one recently created in the U.S. under the Department for Homeland Security."

The editorial in financial Les Echos is entitled: "Hazing Bernanke." For Pierre-Angel Gay the relationship between Black Monday in October 87 and the recent fall of the NYSE is "the arrival, both times, of a novice to head the Federal Reserve... At the time, Greenspan's reaction and the way he got out from under led some to

say that he was being tested... But to say that the same holds true for Bernanke may be going too far..."

Les Echos also carries an interview with former U.S. Ambassador to France Felix Rohatyn who supports the merger between Paris Euronext stock exchange and the NYSE: "this is the best way for both to increase their attractiveness worldwide and to compete with London... With this merger, Paris will become Europe's financial capital..."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq

"Bush in the Heart of the Iraqi Quagmire"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/14): "Security constraints have their silver lining. Yesterday, President Bush took full advantage of these as he visited Baghdad, taking everyone by surprise, including his host... This was a get-acquainted visit for the President and PM al-Maliki. The White House hopes that treating Maliki as a political partner on an equal footing will consolidate his legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqis... President Bush apparently found what he was looking for: confirmation that Washington can count on the government to progressively decrease its presence in Iraq... President Bush was able to congratulate the American forces for the elimination of Zarkawi. But mostly the visit was well timed to coincide with the political calendar in the U.S. Although the President's ratings have plummeted because of the war, his advisor Karl Rove expects to use the war as an electoral weapon."

"Surprise Visit to Baghdad"

Bruno Fanucchi in right-of-center Le Parisien (06/14): "Six days after eliminating Zarkawi, President Bush gave himself the opportunity to bank on this un-hoped for success. And to reiterate America's determination to 'win the war against terrorism,' in which 'Iraq plays a central role...' because, as the President said, 'when America makes a promise, it delivers...' But the American President took pains to avoid setting any deadline for a troop withdrawal, and refused to stand by General Casey's statement on Sunday about a partial pullout, insisting that a decrease in troops would 'depend on conditions on the ground' which have drastically worsened in the past several weeks."

Middle East - Olmert to Europe - Gaza Violence

"Promised Land, Cursed Land"

Les Echos's editorial board under the pen name Favilla (06/14): "The text of the referendum proposed by Abbas is considered by outside observers to be a clever initiative. The text clearly recognizes the existence of Israel in that it does not demand all of Palestine, but the territories not occupied by Israel in 67. But the hopes of seeing all parties rallying to the initiative have been short-lived. Israel's unilateral pullout from Gaza and the West Bank was intended as a fait accompli and not the result of a dialogue. It does not care for a text that would reopen negotiations on Israel's borders. As for Hamas, it picked up quickly on the fact that the referendum intended to deprive it of an opportunity to expand its sovereignty over all of Israel's territories. This is a position shared by all Islamic extremists and Iran's President... While the document of the imprisoned Palestinians gave birth to a new hope for peace, it underlines the irreconcilable character of the two internal lines within the Palestinian movement, to the point of leading perhaps to the beginning of a civil war. On the banks of the Jordan, there is not much distance between promised land and cursed land."

"On the Verge of a Civil War"

Patrick Saint-Paul in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/14): "Fatah and Hamas appear to be on collision course... The political battle they have engaged in appears to have no solution... According to Saed Erakat, a Fatah negotiator, 'the Gaza chaos is spreading to the West Bank like a forest fire... It is essential that a single authority take over. Otherwise the internal war is going to worsen...'"

"Europe's Armed Forces: a Global Mission for Peace"

French Defense Minister Alliot-Marie and German counterpart Franz Josef Jung in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/14): "Europe's security and defense policy allows the EU to operate at the level of crises prevention and conflict management... Stability in all of Europe's neighboring countries is in the interest of all Europeans... The Barcelona process has improved security and stability south and East of the Mediterranean... But the EU's foreign and security policies must also operate at the global level... because of the new interdependency in armed conflicts and their consequences... In the context of NEPAD, we support the efforts of our African neighbors: Europe's initiatives in Africa are growing in number... The fate of the African continent is increasingly a matter of concern for all of Europe and not solely for those countries that border the Mediterranean." STAPLETON